



CPB Requests \$32 million in FY 2009 for Ready To Learn

In February 2008, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) requested from Congress \$32 million in fiscal year (FY) 2009 for the Ready To Learn (RTL) program at the U.S. Department of Education. The House version of the FY 2009 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies appropriations bill would fund RTL at \$24 million; the Senate version at \$27 million.

RTL uses the power of public broadcasting's educational content to build the reading skills of children between the ages of 2-8, with a focus on those from low income families. RTL programming is free and universally available through local public television stations and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). Launched in 1993, RTL was reauthorized by No Child Left Behind in 2001 and is administered by the Department of Education.

In 2006, CPB's position as public broadcasting's national education leader was recognized by the Department, which chose us as the lead grantee for the RTL program. Under the current five-year grant structure, RTL is a partnership between CPB, PBS, WGBH-TV in Boston, WTTW-TV in Chicago, Sesame Workshop, Out of the Blue Productions, leading children's literacy researchers and public television stations.

As lead grantee, CPB has assembled a coalition of educators, researchers, content developers, creative talent and reading specialists. In addition, CPB is implementing an evaluation component to measure reading improvement for a range of ages and aptitudes. The required outcome of the grant is to improve the reading abilities of these low-income children, and we have targeted over 150,000 low income households in 23 states and the District of Columbia.

The RTL programming plan includes the development of three new children's series, each thoroughly researched and tested and devised to teach essential elements of reading. *Super Why* is about the adventures of a miniature reading super hero who leaps into the pages of books in search of answers. *Martha Speaks*, based on a popular children's storybook series, follows the journeys of a family dog named Martha whose craving for alphabet soup allows her to communicate in letters that spell words. *The New Electric Company* will reinvent this classic favorite online and on TV. In addition, CPB will support new episodes of two existing reading-rich series – *Between the Lions* and *Sesame Street*. These programs are developed through sophisticated research that will make new series and episodes, and complimentary online and print materials, highly engaging and interactive, as well as effective at teaching basic literacy skills. RTL materials, which are successfully developed and tested to most effectively teach reading, will be made available to childcare centers, schools, libraries, and other appropriate destinations.

An appropriation of \$32 million in FY 2009 will enable programming and accompanying materials to be created and tested on a faster timeline, and will enable more communities to become involved in the existing station-based outreach activities.